

Question Difficulty Guide

CATEGORY 1: KNOWLEDGE & COMPREHENSION

Regardless of the material you are testing, most disciplines require prerequisite mastery of certain knowledge and the ability to explain, or comprehend, this material. Questions written to knowledge and comprehension levels of difficulty test only students' abilities to remember and explain facts – not to problem solve.

Knowledge level

At the knowledge level students would be required to remember facts, terms, concepts, definitions, and principles.

Verbs to watch for - define, list, state, identify, label, and name. Who? When? Where? What?

Comprehension level

At the comprehension level, students would be required to explain or interpret the meaning of material.

Verbs to watch for - explain, predict, interpret, infer, summarize, translate, give example, account for, and paraphrase.

CATEGORY 2: APPLICATION & ANALYSIS

Writing questions at these levels of difficulty makes students show their problem solving skills – a more demanding task than remembering and explaining facts and concepts.

Application level

At the application level students would be required to use a concept or principle to solve a problem.

Verbs to watch for - apply, solve, show, make use of, modify, demonstrate, and compute.

Analysis level

At the level of analysis, students would be required to see inter-relationships, see or construct hierarchies of ideas or actions, and break material down into its component parts.

Verbs to watch for - differentiate, compare and contrast, distinguish x from y. Answer how does x relate to y? Why does x work?

CATEGORY 3: SYNTHESIS & EVALUATION

Writing questions at the levels of *synthesis* and *evaluation* require the maximum amount of effort from students. These types of questions are also the most time consuming to write well.

Synthesis level

At the synthesis level, students would be required to produce something new or original from component parts.

Verbs to watch for - design, construct, develop, formulate, imagine, create, change, and write.

Evaluation level

At the level of evaluation, students would be required to make judgments based on pre-established criteria.

Verbs to watch for – appraise, evaluate, judge, and determine which action would be better?